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Bill seeks reparations for WWII POWs

By ANGEL WILSON, Palm Beach Post Staff Writer
Thursday, September 26, 2002

WASHINGTON -- American GIs forced to labor for their Japanese captors in World War II should have the right to sue for reparations, members of Congress argued Wednesday.

The State Department is keeping the former prisoners of war from suing Japanese companies because of its interpretation of a peace treaty the two nations signed in 1951, Reps. Dana Rohrabacher, R-Calif., and Mike Honda, D-Calif., said at a news conference and at a House hearing.

The two have sponsored a bill, the Justice for United States Prisoners of War Act of 2001, that would allow the POWs to sue.

The bill is not aimed at Japanese citizens, Rohrabacher said at a press conference before the hearing. "We are, in fact, directing most of our anger to the U.S. government."

"The Communist Chinese government is pursuing justice for its citizens," Rohrabacher said. "However, the United States government has refused to support similar claims by survivors of Corregidor and the Bataan Death March."

Some of the main supporters of the bill are survivors of the Bataan Death March, U.S. soldiers who were marched for days through the Philippine jungles after being captured in April 1942.

For those who survived, the next few years were a fight for life. Many were forced into slave labor by private Japanese companies, including Mitsui Mining and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries.

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While the U.S. government has given compensation to all POWs, Honda and Rohrabacher do not believe that \$890 back in 1948 makes up for their suffering.

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